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capable," is significant. Neither Ruskin nor any other critic is on the whole more successful than Hearn in making his readers understand and feel the subtle fusion in poetry of the poet's "message," his significance and meaning, with his imagery and his magic phrasing—that fusion which conveys the sense of warmth and intimacy and conviction.

It is true that apart from the curiosity which lends interest to the careful exposition by another of our own quite simple and matter-of-course knowledge and ideas—the interest of seeing that what we have taken for granted needs to be explained and defended—certain passages in the lectures are a little dull. But the volume as a whole is remarkable in its power to make one feel the beauties of poets so diverse as Swinburne and Matthew Arnold. The lecture on Kingsley, for example, though very simple, is a revelation.

Professor Erskine has been criticized for words, published in a previous volume, which place Hearn as a critic practically on a level with Coleridge. It may be said, perhaps, that so far as the present volume is concerned, one who cares less for the reputation of critics than for the value of poetry will not seriously object to this estimate of Hearn's critical powers. No sharp line can be drawn between the criticism that interprets and that which enhances. All criticism must do both. Hearn's interpretations are a trifle narrow; those of Coleridge tended to branch out into metaphysics or into the subjective intricacies of his own mind. Both illuminate. The criticisms of Hearn have, so to speak, a pedagogical and also a personal value that is quite distinct.

OUR NATION IN THE BUILDING. By HELEN NICOLAY. New York: The Century Company, 1916.

The opening sentence of Miss Nicolay's preface—"it occurs to the writer that we take our history too seriously"—perhaps does a slight injustice to the book of which it gives the first impressions. It is not through any light disregard of vital ideas or through any uncontrollable love of romancing that the author makes history attractive to her readers. Her book is valuable primarily because it enables one easily to grasp those ideas and sequences of events which one must have a vital grasp of if one is to know, in any real sense, anything at all about American history.

The trouble is, not that we take our history too seriously, or even that we take it too technically, but that a high-school student, say, needs to be a prodigy of industry and of appreciation in order to derive a vital conception of history from the average school text, and a teacher has to be a paragon of tact and learning in order to do what the text-book simply can't do—give life to the subject. Collateral reading is necessary, but its results are somewhat uncertain.

The point of all this is not that Miss Nicolay's book would be a good one to put in a school library, but simply that as regards history many of us with our mature and presumably trained minds, and with our superior capacity for being interested, are really in the condition of the high-school or grammar-school student. We can not constrain ourselves to go to the school text-books; we can not read the scientific histories because we have not time; when we read in original sources we are interested, but we do not get anywhere. And we really want to know something about American history.

Miss Nicolay has realized the need that some one should tell the story of the building of our nation in a literary manner, untechnically but with grasp, coherence and fluency of style. She has realized too that it is quite impossible to be interested in reading about Washington or Jefferson without knowing in some detail what sort of men Washington and Jefferson were. Without details and anecdotes there is slight interest, and without interest little grasp. She has done what is not very often done: she has written a really "popular" book for persons of intelligence and good taste. From this volume almost any one may enjoyably refresh his knowledge of American history.